

PORTLAND, DALLES AND SALT LAKE RAILROAD.

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MEMORIAL  
OF  
THE LEGISLATURE OF IDAHO,  
ASKING

*For aid in the construction of the Portland, Dalles and Salt Lake Railroad.*

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JANUARY 6, 1873.—Referred to the Committee on the Public Lands and ordered to be printed.

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*To the honorable the Congress of the United States:*

Your memorialists, the legislative assembly of the Territory of Idaho, respectfully represent that, on behalf the inhabitants of the Territory, they join with the legislature of the State of Oregon in praying earnestly that your honorable body will grant aid to the Portland, Dalles and Salt Lake Railroad Company, in the construction of a railroad from its terminus on the line of the Union and Central Pacific Road, through this Territory, to Portland, Oregon.

Your honorable body has been so often memorialized upon this subject that it would seem to be a work of supererogation to again state the subject of our grievance.

The Territory of Idaho joins the State of Oregon at its eastern boundary, and extends east to the Rocky Mountains. On the south the Territory is bounded by Utah Territory and the State of Nevada; and on the north by the British possessions; thus showing a vast area of domain. Within its bounds there are perhaps not to exceed twenty-five thousand white inhabitants, a large majority of whom live in the valleys of Snake River and the waters flowing into it. On our west is Eastern Oregon, another extensive district of country, which, joined to Idaho Territory, embraces a great belt of mineral, agricultural, and grazing lands, reaching from the basin of Salt Lake to the Columbia River, a distance of six hundred miles, and little less in its average width. In this vast area we have no railroad except a few miles in the eastern portion, projected from the Central Pacific, extending north to intercept the trade of Montana. The North Pacific, it is true, according to its charter would pass through the northern portion of Idaho, but at a distance so great from the valley of Snake River, a distance, say, of four or five hundred miles, that it would be to us useless, affording no facilities or advantages.

For two hundred miles northwestwardly from the basin of Salt Lake the surface of the country is made up of high mountains, vast sage-plains, and lava covered with rich-bunch grass, and occasional small

bodies of occasional rich agricultural lands. As you proceed further toward the Columbia River the proportion of agricultural lands increases rapidly, and finally predominates as the ruling characteristic of the country.

It cannot be unknown to your honorable body that for five hundred miles along and through this belt of country lie innumerable mineral deposits, rich in gold, silver, copper, and lead, but by reason of their inaccessibility, the high cost of transportation, and the tedious and slow mode of introducing machinery, and exporting ores and bullion, these rich deposits have been but partially developed, and but to a limited extent explored; nor is it new to your honorable body that it requires heavy capital fully to develop these mineral regions, which, for richness, variety, and extent, we say, without the fear of successful contradiction, are unsurpassed upon the Pacific slope.

It would be almost incredible to state with exactness the extent and richness of the gold and silver bearing quartz which, for miles, protrude from the earth in well-defined ledges, varying in thickness from two to thirty feet, and yet, under the disadvantages before alluded to, lie undeveloped, valueless to the discoverers and the Government. To say that in this belt of country there are copper-fields of great richness, conveys no correct idea of their value and importance to the country. Recent developments establish, beyond question, the fact that at no great distance from the line of the proposed road there exist immense fields of copper of the Peacock quality, sixty to ninety per cent. of which is pure copper, and assaying ——— dollars of pure gold to the ton, and which, it is believed, with the facilities for working and transportation, would alone pay for constructing the proposed road. And while an immense volume of European capital takes position along the lines of the Union and Central Pacific Railroads, from whence to delve into and develop every important mineral district within striking distance, it revolts at the idea of leaving quick, easy, and cheap transportation upon railroads, for the long, tedious journeys across our sage-plains, to invest in enterprises attended with such drawbacks and inconveniences. A single instance will serve to show at what a great disadvantage the enterprise of the country labors in its agricultural and mining pursuits. It occupies from four to five weeks, frequently, for large freight teams to make the trip to the Pacific Railroad and back, while in the same space of time the Columbia River merchant may take steamer and railroad to New York, purchase his goods, and return again to a point, by the usually traveled route, fifteen hundred miles farther from New York than Boise City.

The proposed Portland, Dalles and Salt Lake Railroad will lie centrally through the vast belt of country between the basin of Salt Lake and the Columbia Valley, and the construction of the road would not only render our great mineral districts accessible to capital, afford cheaply and speedily all the machinery and appliances necessary to the profitable working of our mines and the exportation of ores and bullion, but would open and develop this vast country to settlement and occupancy to its fullest capacity for agricultural and grazing pursuits, which otherwise must forever remain unoccupied and unappropriated, utterly valueless to the Government, the people, and the settler. To dispose of these wild and inaccessible lands to the settler at the lowest rate, and appropriate a portion of the proceeds of such sales to the construction of a road through them, would be the highest order of economy in the Government, and the best and wisest form of liberality toward the hardy pioneer and settler of the new country.

The trunk road once constructed, and private enterprise will supply

feeders along the line necessary to meet the demands of the various mining, agricultural, and lumber districts within striking distance of the road.

Aside from the general advantages arising from its construction, the early completion of those sections upon the Columbia River having for their object the opening of that great river to free navigation, competition in transportation, and the consequent reduction of fifty per cent. in the cost of freights for Northern Idaho, and the eastern portions of Oregon and Washington, not only calls for our earnest appeal in that behalf, but affords additional reasons for invoking every possible aid in the construction of the through line.

But the advantages to be derived from the construction of the proposed road would not be confined to the locality of its construction; it would connect by the shortest and most direct route the great Pacific Northwest with the heart and commerce of the nation. In the basin of Salt Lake, connecting with the many and diverging lines of railroad leading to almost every point of the compass, it must afford rare facilities for communication between the extremes of the nation, and so afford a through traffic of great magnitude, the chiefest support and surest guarantee for remunerative returns. It is not too much to say that this route will compare favorably with any other as being in the line of trade between the United States and Asia, to be fed and supported by exports in exchange for importations, enhanced as it must be by a vast producing and manufacturing population in the Pacific Northwest.

For these and many other good reasons your memorialists propose to give some reasonable aid in the construction of said road through this Territory, and pray your honorable body to grant lands or the proceeds thereof also in aid of its construction.

Passed the house of representatives on the 17th day of December, 1872.

S. S. FENN,

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

Passed the council on the 16th day of December, 1872.

J. M. COSTON,

*President of the Council.*

Approved December 19, 1872.

T. W. BENNETT,

*Governor.*

SECRETARY'S OFFICE, IDAHO TERRITORY,

*December 19, 1872.*

I, E. J. Curtis, secretary of Idaho Territory, do hereby certify that the within council memorial, two, praying for aid in behalf of the "Portland, Dalles and Salt Lake Railroad Company," is a true and correct copy of the original memorial, as passed by the legislative assembly of Idaho Territory, and approved by the governor of Idaho, and now on file in my office.

Witness my hand and the seal of the Territory of Idaho.

[SEAL.]

E. J. CURTIS,

*Secretary of Idaho.*

